THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) to (e) There is no proposal to recommend a site from Orissa for inclusion in the World Heritage list because the World Heritage Committee in its 28th session held in Suzhou, China in 2004 has restricted only one cultural nomination per year. The Government has already proposed for Majuli Island in Assam for 2006 and is resubmitting nomination dossier for Red Fort. Further, as per provisions of the Operational Guidelines for implementation of the World Heritage Convention each State Party has to submit to the World Heritage Committee a tentative list of sites which it intends to nominate for inscription on the World Heritage List.

Remains of cities near Surat

†443. SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH; Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Archaeological Survey of India has recently found one thousand year old remains of cities and village near Surat in Gujarat; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) and (b) the excavations carried out by the Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi, at the Centrally protected site of Kamrej, District Surat, Gujarat, during the field season 2002-03, have brought to light remains of an early Historical settlement, with industrial centres of iron making, shell crafting, bead making, etc. The evidence unearthed further indicated that the site was a trade port, having overseas contacts with the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

Valley of Flowers in Uttaranchal

444. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the World famous Valley of Flowers in the Uttaranchal Himalayas has been declared a natural world heritage site by UNESCO; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the steps Government propose to take to conserve this site?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir. This site has been declared as World Heritage Site as an extension to Nanda Devi National Park.

(b) State Government of Uttaranchal has proposed to undertake regular census of major bio-diversity in the National Park. To protect the bio-diversity in Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, a special force *viz.* 'Operation Snow Leopard" has been commissioned. This force would control poaching and illegal trafficking of valuable bio-diversity in Valley of Flowers which forms a part of the Nanda Devi Biosphere. Facilities for tourism have been developed from Govindghat to Ghangharia. Under the eco-development programmes activities like removal of plastic waste and other garbage from the National Park area have been taken up.

Corporate participation for conservation of monuments

445. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Archaeological Survey of India, the sole custodian of the national monuments, has decided to allow corporate participation in its conservation efforts;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the initial corporate participation would be for conservation of 5000 monuments under the ASI's direct protection; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir. The Archaeological Survey of India is allowing corporate participation in conservation efforts under the auspices of the National Culture Fund.

(b) and (c) Negotiations are under process with various corporate houses for participation in the conservation of protected monuments of national importance. MoU has been signed/projects executed in five instances, details of which are given at enclosed statement.